

*January, 1899.***To the Chairman and Members of the Finedon Urban District Council.**

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present to you my fourth Annual Report on the Public Health and Sanitary Condition of Finedon, together with the tables of births, sickness, and deaths, classified as required by the Local Government Board and by the County Council.

The area of Finedon is 3654 acres of land, and 7 acres of water.

There are 840 inhabited houses in the township. In estimating the population, I have allowed five inhabitants to each house, and so calculate the population at the present time to be 4200, being an increase of 1003 on the census of 1891.

During the year 123 births were registered, comprising 69 males and 54 females, and giving a birth-rate of 29.2 per 1000 per annum, and being a decrease of 30 as compared with 1897, of 17 as compared with 1896 and 1895. The decrease is in the number of births registered, not in the number of children born, and is due to the fact that a great number of children were born during the last two months of the year, and the births have not yet been registered.

The deaths registered number 53, being a decrease of 6 as compared with 1897, 1 as compared with 1896, and 6 as compared with 1895, and giving a death-rate of 12.6 per 1000 per annum, as compared with 15.9 in 1897, 14.9 in 1896, and 16.7 in 1895. This rate is most satisfactory.

The number of deaths of Infants under one year of age was 14, giving a rate of 113.8 per 1000 births registered. This is, as usual all over the country, a high one, though in our case not so high as in previous years.

There were 9 deaths from Zymotic disease: viz., one from Scarlet Fever, two from Measles, and six from Diarrhœa, giving a rate of 2.1 per 1000 per annum. This rate is a little higher than last year, and is due to the fact that diarrhœa was very prevalent during the hot weather, and played havoc, as usual, with the bottle-fed babies.

Phthisis was responsible for six deaths, giving a rate of 1.1 per 1000 per annum. Phthisis is a preventible disease. It is not as is popularly supposed "hereditary," though the narrow chest and weakly physique, so favourable to the development of the germs of the disease, are. It is due to a specific germ, and may be contracted from the following sources: the dry expectoration of persons suffering from the disease, the milk of animals suffering from the disease, and the under-cooked flesh of animals so suffering. It cannot be contracted from the breath of persons suffering from the disease, nor from the moist expectoration. Our means of prevention are: the careful inspection of the meat and milk supplies, the destruction of the expectoration of persons suffering from the disease, the encouragement of physical exercise to develop the narrow chests and improve the general physique of our weakly ones, and the improvement of the sanitation and ventilation of the habitations of both man and beast.

Diseases of the Respiratory organs, other than Phthisis, were responsible for 4 deaths, giving a rate of .9 per 1000 per annum. This is a remarkably low rate.

There was one inquest held during the year, death being due to a fall from a stack.

The following table gives approximately the ages at which the deaths registered occurred:—

Under one year,	One and under five years,	Five and under fifteen years,	Fifteen and under twenty-five years,	Twenty-five and under sixty-five years,	Over sixty-five years,
14.	8.	3.	2.	15.	11.

During the year I received 20 Notifications of Infectious Disease: Scarlet Fever 14, Typhoid Fever 5, Erysipelas 1.

The cases of Scarlet Fever were the continuation of the epidemic of that disease which began in the last quarter of the previous year, and which is happily now a thing of the past. One case proved fatal. Three out of the five cases of Typhoid Fever occurred in one house. The water supply was bad, and notice to that effect was posted on the pump. In the other two cases the sanitary arrangements were bad, and were improved. There were no fatal cases.

During the hot weather we had a good deal of Diarrhœa, especially amongst the younger children, and this disease was responsible for 6 deaths.

Measles was introduced from Irthlingborough in the last quarter of the year, but fortunately was not able to obtain a foothold, and the few cases we had were isolated to the best of our ability, and the children from the infected houses kept from school. The great difficulty in preventing the spread of measles is the non-appreciation, or non-realization, by the parents of the dangerous nature of the disease and its complications. "It's only measles" is the remark one often hears. It may therefore be well to state here that measles, with the exception of whooping-cough, is responsible for more deaths amongst children than any other disease, and it is especially fatal between the ages of one and three years. If I could only get people to believe that the best way of doing their duty towards their neighbour, in whose house there is a case of infectious disease, even if it is "only measles," is by keeping out of it, we should have fewer cases and less trouble with those we do have. It is a duty they owe to their children and to the community generally, as well as their duty towards their neighbour. One too often hears the remark, "I've had it in my house, why shouldn't somebody else have it in theirs?" People who think thus are the greatest stumbling-blocks to the progress of preventive medicine, and are always a source of danger to the community they dwell in.

There have been no cases of Diphtheria during the year.

There have been no cases of Small-pox. The three great means of combating this loathsome disease are: (1) Vaccination, (2) Improved Sanitation, and (3) Isolation. As far as I can make out, Finedon people will have nothing to do with the first of these three. They argue that improved Sanitation is the only means of preventing small-pox, and Isolation the only means of preventing the spread in case of an outbreak. You are improving the Sanitation, and I ask you to give me an Isolation Hospital for the town, so that we may be ready. I ask for this because I feel quite sure the people who argue as I have just stated will not object to the necessary increase in the rates, which the building of such a hospital will cause, since it will afford them an opportunity to show themselves willing to back their own opinions, and at the same time to provide us with a means of combating infectious disease in its various forms. Isolation Hospitals are but poor and very expensive things, in my opinion, to fall back upon when small-pox has broken out in an un-vaccinated community. Gloucester spent £15,000 in one epidemic alone, and the death-rate was very large.

I must here express my firm belief in Vaccination and Re-vaccination as a means of preventing small-pox, and also my opinion that the last Act of Parliament dealing with Vaccination is one of the worst Acts ever turned out by any Government at any time.

The Public Health, as a whole, has been good throughout the year.

In referring to the Sanitary conditions of the town last year, I congratulated you on the near completion of the new Sewage scheme. The improved health of the village speaks of the good it has already done. There are, however, many connections not yet made, owing to our shortness of water for flushing purposes. There is room yet, I think, for improvement in the ventilating of the sewer.

I hope, Gentlemen, that before the close of another year we shall have made some visible progress towards obtaining a good Water Supply. The majority of our wells are more or less liable to contamination, and our present means of supply must always be a source of anxiety to those who have the care of the public health.

During the past year your able Inspector of Nuisances reports that under his direction 83 closets have been provided with new pails; 12 houses have been disinfected; 5 cases of overcrowding have been enquired into and put right; 11 cesspits have been done away with; 23 bad drains put right. In four cases pigeons, ducks, and rabbits have been removed from dwelling-houses; 21 heaps of rubbish and ashes have been removed by order. The water of three wells has been condemned. Disinfectants have been supplied freely where necessary. There has been no article of food exposed for sale condemned. No obnoxious trade has been carried on in the town.

The Contractors for the removal of the house-refuse and night-soil are new to their work, so it is hardly fair to be too critical. I should like them to be more careful in emptying the pails, and to use disinfecting powder to the empty pails.

All nuisances have been abated at the order of the Inspector, without resort to severer measures.

In conclusion, Gentlemen, I must say that I think we have reason to congratulate ourselves on the lowness of our death-rate, and the state of the public health during the past year; both of which will stand comparison with any town in the United Kingdom.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

H. BURLAND,

M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. (Lond.), F.R.I.P.H.,

Medical Officer of Health.

